

The IDVA Update



Mitch Daniels - Governor
Tom Applegate - Director

October 2005

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter

Fall Edition

Veterans' Day at the Indiana State Fair



From: Left, Ms. Tiffany Shore, Miss Ball State University 2005; Ms. Emmy Huffman, representing Senator Richard Lugar; State Representative Bill Ruppel, District 22; Col. Richard "Pappy" Harshman, Indiana Army National Guard retired; Mr. Dick Crum, Director, Indiana State Fair; Tom Applegate, Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs; and, at the podium, Maj. General Martin Umbarger, Commanding General, Indiana National Guard

Veterans' Day at the Indiana State Fair was Sunday, August 21, 2005. At 10 AM a ceremony was conducted at the WFMS Free Stage on the north side of the fair grounds to honor the wives and mothers of those Hoosiers who have given their lives in the War on Terror and members of Indiana National Guard and reserve units who have recently returned from serving overseas in the war.

On this day IDVA Director Tom Applegate presented two gold star wives and one gold star mother with plaques honoring their loved ones lost in the War on Terror. The plaques are replicas of those to be placed in the Memorial Wall to be assembled in the hallway of the Government Center South outside of the offices of the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs.

New State Law Regarding Recording of Documents Containing SSN

Senate Enrolled Act 503, effective July 1, 2005, as Public Law 91, has been interpreted by many County Recorders to mean that whenever they accept a document for recording which contains the Social Security Number of the individual they must first make a copy of the document, white out or otherwise remove the Social Security Number from the copy of the document. It is the altered document which will be recorded in their files. Moreover, in the case of a document which was recorded prior to this law, the individual will have to authorize in writing the release of the document if it contains their Social Security Number.

County Service Officers are aware that the DD Form 214, Record of Military Service or Discharge, contains the individual's Social Security Number, and that the Social Security Number has always been a major factor when filing for claims from the VA. A DD Form 214 without the Social Security Number of the veteran claimant may cause a lot of problems in the claims process. More and more certified DD Forms 214 may have to be requested from IDVA or from St. Louis (NPRC) rather than obtained from local County Recorders.

For this reason it will be increasingly important that before requesting a military discharge from IDVA the County Service Officer should obtain a signed release from the veteran that he or she approves the release of their discharge document and that IDVA is authorized to release this document which contains their Social Security Number. We have revised this form and it is available from our site on the internet. The revised version will also be available at the Fall Conference. If you need it sooner give us a call and we will mail you a few copies.

Effective October 31, 2005, we will be unable to release a military discharge without first receiving this authorization, which can be faxed to us at 1-317-232-7721.

Tom Applegate
Director

IDVA Now Recording National Guard Discharges

In a recent agreement with the Indiana National Guard Historical Branch located at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, IDVA is now receiving a State copy of the Guard's military discharge, the NGB Form 22.

For traditional Guardsmen the NGB Form 22 is as valuable a document as the DD Form 214 is to an active duty service member. Guardsmen who complete at least one satisfactory enlistment in the National Guard are eligible for certain federal VA benefits, and National Guard retirees are eligible for even more. We were informed by the State Archives that they had received no National Guard discharges since the 1950's, and they were very excited to begin receiving them again.

In my experience as a County Veterans' Service Officer I found that the copy of the NGB Form 22, which can be obtained directly from the Guard's Historical Branch, was almost always unreadable due to the fact that it was recorded on microfiche in a reduced state. Many times it was a bad or blurry picture in the first place. Even enlarging the document didn't make it easier to read. The NGB Form 22 we get is a crisp, clear image which we are scanning into our files. We then send it for filing in the Archives just as we do the active duty DD Forms 214. Our NGB Form 22 records begin with those discharged from the Guard since April 2005, with some selected discharges as far back as September 2004.

Guard members, former Guard members or County Service Officers who call for a copy of their NGB Form 22 will receive a certified copy of our scanned image. This service to our National Guard members adds a new dimension to a service which was previously offered only to former active duty service members. We feel this truly enhances the services IDVA and the County Veterans' Service Officers offer to the veterans of Indiana.

Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Fall Conference

Thursday, October 20, 2005

Auditorium, Joint Forces Headquarters – Indiana
Stout Field - 2002 Holt Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240

0900-0905 Tom Applegate – Welcome

Pledge of Allegiance

0905-0930 Director and IDVA Staff – State Updates

0930-1000 Bob Linden, VA Regional Office
Federal Updates

1000-1030 Dave Varble
Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

1030-1100 Peter Woodbridge, M.D
Roudebush VAMC
Ambulatory Care Home Health Monitor

1100-1145 National Personnel Records Center
(NPRC) – Updates

1145-1230 Bob Sterling
Veterans' Information Management
System (VIMS)

1230-1300 Russ Bensheimer – Indiana Joint Services

Army Defines Criteria for New Combat Badge

By Lisa Burgess, Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Courtesy of U.S. Army

The new Combat Action Badge has a rectangular design and encircling laurel wreath that echoes its inspiration, the Combat Infantry Badge.

ARLINGTON, VA. - Infantry soldiers are eligible to receive the Army's new badge acknowledging a soldier's participation in active fighting - but only if they are not assigned directly to an infantry battalion.

That eligibility question - and many others surrounding the Combat Action Badge, or CAB - have been answered.

Until Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker approved the CAB on May 2 the only Army badges acknowledging action during wartime were the World War II-vintage Combat Infantry Badge, which to this day is reserved for infantry and Special Forces, and the Combat Medical Badge for medics.

The new badge, on the other hand, is available to any active, Reserve or National Guard soldier who is "personally present and actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy, and performing satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement," according to initial criteria issued by Army officials May 4.

A June 3 letter from Schoomaker to his field commanders, containing detailed criteria and issuing instructions, answers many soldiers' questions about the new badge.

Q: Am I eligible for both the CIB and the CAB?

A: Infantrymen are eligible to receive the CAB, but only if the combat action that sparks its award occurred at a time when they were "not be assigned or attached to a unit that would qualify" for the Combat Infantry Badge, according to the instructions.

For example, an "11B," the Army's job designation for an infantryman who is assigned to an infantry unit when engaged in combat, may be eligible for a Combat Infantry Badge - but not the CAB.

However, an 11B assigned to a Corps headquarters when the action occurred is eligible for a CAB, the instructions say.

The instructions also make it clear that infantrymen can be awarded both the CAB and the infantry badge (and the medic badge, for that matter, if they qualify) for actions performed "in the same qualifying period, provided the criteria for each badge is met."

Q: Can I be awarded the CAB more than once?

A: It's possible, the letter says. Second and third awards would be marked by stars centered on the badge's wreath.

However, only one CAB can be awarded "during a qualifying period," the instructions say.

Q: I'm a veteran of a previous conflict. Am I eligible for the new badge?

A: No. While the badge has a retroactive eligibility date of Sept. 18, 2001, "award for qualifying service in previous conflicts is not authorized," the instructions say.

Q: I think I qualify for the new badge. How do I apply for it?

A: Soldiers who are in combat zones should ask their immediate commanders how to apply.

Those soldiers who are no longer in combat zones must have their applications for the CAB "forwarded through the first two-star general in their chain of command" to the Army's Human Resources Command, the instructions say.

The forwarding address is CG, USA HRC, Attn: AH-HRC-PDO-PA, Alexandria, VA 22332-0471.

PTSD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

As a result of service experiences 10 to 20% of veterans will subsequently develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychiatric disorder that occurs after a life-threatening event such as personal assault, natural disaster, or military combat. The affects of PTSD can be debilitating with symptoms ranging from severe nightmares and flashbacks to insomnia and increasing social isolation. In recent years the focus for the military has been on the rising occurrences of combat-related disorders as more and more soldiers return from war. It is common for soldiers to deal with post-combat depression, insomnia, nightmares and family issues; however, it's the duration and intensity that differentiate normal reaction from a diagnosis of PTSD. According to clinical psychologists it's normal to be affected by combat. However, when the nightmares

become so vivid and horrible they wake the soldier from sleep, or the soldier develops such profound anger that the symptoms become problematic, if these and other symptoms continue for six months, PTSD is a strong possibility. To start the healing process psychiatrists recommend a variety of methods such as relaxation techniques, sleep strategies, and, in some cases, medication. Each military branch has programs for its service members, and the Department of Veterans Affairs offers free counseling sessions. For more information on PTSD or VA assistance refer to The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) website www.ncptsd.va.gov or contact the local military mental health facility. [Source: Military.com Report 18 JUL 05]

MILITARY IDENTIFICATION (ID) CARDS

A retired military ID card is issued to each military retiree and to eligible family members. Eligible family members must renew their ID card periodically (usually every four years). If you are enrolled in Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) your eligibility may be verified and the card issued at the nearest military ID card issuing office. You can find the nearest ID card issuing office at www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/owa/home by zip code, state, city or name. Those who do not have access to the Internet may call the MOAA Member Service Center at (800) 234-6622.

If you are disabled and/or do not live near a military base you may be able to obtain a new ID card by mail. To do this, write a letter explaining why you cannot get to the ID Card office (for example, poor health or disability) and request an ID Card be issued to you through the mail. The letter should include your name, Social Security number, current mailing address, telephone number, physical characteristics (hair color, eye color, height, and weight). You must also include a notarized "8X10" photo which can be black and white or color. A notary indicates that the photo is a true photo of the person requesting the ID Card. If you have any questions regarding any ID Card policy you should contact the nearest ID Card office.

VA Announces New Survivor Benefits Web Site

September 13, 2005

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has created a new Internet Web site for the surviving spouses and dependents of military personnel who died on active duty and for the survivors and dependents of veterans who died after leaving the military.

"One of VA's basic missions is to care for the survivors of veterans and military members," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "By harnessing the power of the Internet we can provide them with the latest information about benefits in a clear, readable format."

The Web site is organized into two broad categories – death in service and death after service. It provides visitors with information about a wide range of benefits for the surviving spouse, dependent children, and dependent parents of deceased veterans and active-duty personnel.

The site also has information from - and links to - other federal agencies and organizations that offer benefits and services to survivors and dependents.

The new website can be found at www.vba.va.gov/survivors or by clicking the "Survivors Benefits" button on the left panel of www.vba.va.gov.

Cass County VSO Passes Away

Resto D'Andrea, Cass County Veterans' Service Officer, passed away on September 26 after a long illness.

Resto entered the U. S. Army on September 27, 1946 and served until his discharge on January 14, 1948, achieving the rank of Corporal. For his service he earned the World War II Victory Medal and the Army of Occupation Medal (Japan). He was appointed as the Cass County Veterans' Service Officer on January 1, 1991 and served until his death on September 26, 2005.

IDVA Director Tom Applegate attended the viewing on September 29 and presented the family with a plaque in honor of Resto's devoted service to the veterans of Cass County and the State of Indiana.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Case Review

In response to a review by VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG), VA agreed to review Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases adjudicated between 1999 and 2004 in which the veteran was awarded disability compensation for PTSD at the 100% schedule rate, or was awarded 100% disability compensation based on individual unemployability, with PTSD as the veteran's primary disability. This entire review process has been ongoing starting with the VBA review of the OIG's list of 2,100 cases that formed the basis for their findings related to PTSD. The lessons we are learning from reviewing those cases originally identified by the OIG will be used throughout this careful review process.

The review was precipitated by the OIG's findings that VA had failed, in some cases, to obtain all required evidence to fully document decisions to award or increase disability compensation for PTSD. It is expected that the majority of the claims to be reviewed will be found to include full documentation and will require no further action. Those cases found to require additional documentation will be referred to the appropriate regional office for corrective action.

The essential feature of PTSD is development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event ("stressor") that is generally outside the range of usual human experience. Many veterans experience PTSD six months or more after being exposed to a stressor in service.

Frequently the symptoms manifest themselves after the veteran is separated from service. In those cases where there is no sign of the condition during active duty, the veteran is asked to describe the incident(s) or stressor(s) experienced, which is then confirmed by service records or other accepted criteria such as evidence of exposure to combat or other traumatic events.

The review conducted by the OIG included 2,100 randomly selected PTSD cases. The OIG stated that more than 25 percent of the cases lacked adequate VA documentation of a stressor – an essential element to support a grant of service-connected compensation.

VBA is reviewing these same 2,100 PTSD cases to gain a better understanding of the deficiencies found by the OIG; to identify those cases in which VA did not obtain thorough stressor documentation or otherwise substantiate the decision made, and to determine what additional evidentiary development is needed. The first stage of the review of the 2,100 cases by VBA has been completed, and the cases needing additional development have been referred to the regional offices for corrective actions.

The review of approximately 72,000 PTSD cases will be part of the continuum as VBA is able to analyze the results of the additional development undertaken to correct the deficiencies found in the original 2,100 case review. The results of the additional action necessary to correct these cases will be used in developing the protocol for the larger 72,000 case review.

Expectations are that the majority of the cases reviewed will contain the requisite evidence to support the disability compensation benefits awarded and will require no further action. Where deficiencies are identified, VBA will do everything possible to work with the veterans to obtain the evidence needed. It is likely that in order to correct the deficiencies in stressor documentation, or to support the 100% disability evaluation assigned, some veterans will be asked to provide additional information and/or report for a re-examination.

This review is being undertaken to ensure that VA has obtained all of the evidence required to support its decisions, and that decisions are being made consistently and fairly. Veterans will continue to receive their benefits throughout the review process. No adjustments will be made to any veteran's award until all avenues to obtain the necessary evidence have been exhausted.

COLLEGE CREDIT FOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

The American Council on Education (ACE) was created in 1942 to recognize the educational value of military training and experience. Since that time ACE has continuously evaluated military schools, correspondence courses and occupations to determine the amount and level of academic credit each should be awarded. Through ACE veterans can obtain academic credit for most of the training they have received, including Basic Training. At the ACE Military Programs website vets can determine how much credit they may have already earned. Applying ACE credits can save up to \$600 and 5 months on a typical 3-credit college course. The first step to claiming the credits earned is to request a transcript from your military service. Each service will provide unofficial personal copies and send schools an official copy of your transcript at no charge. Each service branch has their own system for recording your military education and experience credits:

== The Army uses the AARTS system which automatically captures your academic credits from military training and Standardized tests. The AARTS system is available to enlisted soldiers only (<https://aarts.leavenworth.army.mil/Order.htm>). Army Officers must use the form DD 295 (Application for Evaluation of Learning) to report their military training and experience.

== The Navy and Marine Corps use the SMART system. This system automatically captures your training, experience & standardized test scores. (<https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/transcript.html>)

== The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) automatically captures your training, experience and standardized test scores. (http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/active_transc.htm)

== The Coast Guard Institute (CGI) requires each service member to submit documentation of all training (except correspondence course records), along with an enrollment form, to receive a transcript. Unlike the other services you will be unable to get into this transcript system after you leave the service. (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/forms.html>)

CONGRESSIONAL CONTACT

Heightened security measures have dramatically increased the time it takes for a letter sent by post to reach the offices of federal or state legislators. More and more citizens are using e-mails and faxes to communicate their concerns, and elected officials' offices are increasingly preferring electronic communications for constituent contact. As a general rule, members of Congress are far more likely to heed your message if you are one of their constituents. At www.visi.com/juan/congress/ you can locate your representative's name, party, mailing address, e-mail, website, DC telephone and Fax information plus committees they serve on. Each member of Congress has staff to assist him/her during a term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff. Commonly used titles are:

- **Administrative Assistant or Chief of Staff:** The Administrative Assistant reports directly to the member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The Admin. Asst. is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.
- **Legislative Director, Senior Legislative Assistant, or Legislative Coordinator:** The Legislative Director is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In some congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants and responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different Legislative Assistant for health issues, environmental matters, taxes, etc.
- **Press Secretary or Communications Director:** The Press Secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the member, his/her constituency, and the general public. The Press Secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to most effectively promote the member's views or positions on specific issues.

- **Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler:** The Appointment Secretary is usually responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The Appointment Secretary may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc.
- **Caseworker.** The Caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the member's signature. The Caseworker's responsibilities may also include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies; e.g., Social Security and Medicare issues, veterans' benefits, passports, etc. There are often several Caseworkers in a congressional office.
- **Other Staff Titles.** Other titles used in a congressional offices may include: Executive Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Executive Secretary, Office Manager, and Receptionist.

[Source: www.visi.com/juan/congress/ & <http://congress.org/mygov/issues/basics/?style=staff> SEP 05]

OEF/OIF Indiana Honor Roll CD

The Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Indiana Honor Roll CD, first shown at the IDVA Conference in June, is now available free-of-charge for CVSOs and other interested individuals. The program contains information as of August 11, 2005, so no one reported killed since then will be on the disk.

The CD plays on your desktop computer or laptop and is a PowerPoint product. For those whose computer does not have PowerPoint, a free PowerPoint player is contained on the CD. The program will play from the disk after installation of the PowerPoint player.

Contact IDVA at 1-800-400-4520 or e-mail tapplegate@dva.in.gov.

Thanks goes to David Gray for his help in producing this CD.



The Directors' Page

DD 214 Certification

IDVA has recognized that there is sometimes a problem when a veteran wants to file a claim with VA but never had their DD Form 214 recorded and is consequently unable to provide a certified copy. Moreover, because of the present-day problem with the threat of identity theft, they do not wish to record their DD Form 214 at the local County Recorder's office.

IDVA has completed a 6-month pilot program with selected counties during which this agency accepted previously unrecorded DD Forms 214, scanned them into our system, and returned the original and a certified copy to the county. IDVA considers its files to be protected files, and, therefore, not open to the

public - a fact that considerably lessens the possibility of identity theft.

We are now offering this service to all County Veterans' Service Officers. If you are filing a claim for a veteran who has never had his or her DD Form 214 recorded, send us the original DD 214, if possible, and we will scan it into our files and return the original and a certified copy to your office. If the veteran does not have the original DD 214, and if you are reasonably sure that the veteran is giving you an unaltered copy of his or her DD Form 214, send it to us and we will scan it in, certify it, and send it back to you. We will do this not later than the next working day.

We feel that this service to our veterans will eliminate what has been a serious problem in the past and provides a service which will ease the veteran's mind about the possibility of identity theft. It also serves to increase our base of data on Hoosier veterans.

Tom Applegate
Director